



News Release

For Immediate Release

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New Program Aimed at Workplace Literacy

*-Demonstration Project Seeks to Raise
Skill Levels of Incumbent Workforce-*

INDIANAPOLIS (Jan. 9, 2006) -- The Indiana Department of Workforce Development (IDWD) is seeking as many as twelve companies in Indiana to help develop a new training program aimed at raising the workplace skills level of Indiana's workers.

The new 21st Century Workplace Skills Initiative is a demonstration project that could be a forerunner of a larger state effort designed to address the state's workplace basic skills deficit. A study released in January by the Indiana State Chamber of Commerce found that 1 in 3 workers in Indiana had workplace literacy skills below nationally-identified minimum standards necessary for successful employment in a knowledge-based economy.

"The Chamber's study of Indiana's workforce indicated a need to become more efficient and effective in how we train and retrain our adult workers in Indiana, if we are ever going to compete successfully in the 21st century," said Ron Stiver, Indiana Commissioner of Workforce Development. "This study indicated that the current array of resources aimed at adult education and workplace literacy is woefully inadequate to meet this need."

Stiver said the IDWD has received a federal grant that will be used to fund eight to twelve companies in Indiana that aim to raise the workplace basic skill levels of Indiana workers while exploring the viability and effectiveness of different models of workplace basic literacy education.

The companies will be selected through a competitive process, and will develop programs focused on workforce basic skills, which are the basic academic and employability skills required for success in the modern workplace. These skills include reading, math, communication, problem solving, critical thinking, and digital (computer) literacy skills. Three groups of workers will be targeted: incumbent (current), emerging (unemployed), and dislocated (laid off or terminated) workers.

Stiver said that the initiative has four important goals:

- Increase the basic skills of incumbent, emerging, and dislocated workers by at least one level;
- Pilot a 21st Century Workplace Skills Certificate;
- Determine most promising delivery models for workforce basic skills education;
- Build the capacity of workforce basic skills educators.

The demonstration projects to be selected will fall within three separate models of workplace education:

- Model 1: Projects at single companies that strengthen the basic skills of incumbent workers through workplace-based training methods and curricula that use the context of the workplace. These projects will receive up to \$50,000 each;
- Model 2: Projects with consortia of companies that strengthen the basic skills of incumbent workers through workplace-based training methods and curricula that use the context of the workplace. These projects will be funded at up to \$200,000 each; and
- Model 3: Projects with single companies or a consortia of companies that strengthen the basic skills of potential new workers (or those now in lower skilled jobs) by embedding basic skill development into vocational training that leads to occupational certifications of importance to employers. These projects can receive up to \$200,000 each.

Companies interested in applying for the program should contact Terri Schulz, Director of Program Improvement at 317 233-5663 or tschulz@dwd.in.gov.

A question and answer session for prospective applicants is planned for January 17, and a more detailed technical assistance conference will be held on February 14.

Stiver said that should the pilot project prove successful, the IDWD will seek a larger scale program and funding in 2007.

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development is charged with continually improving the Hoosier workforce by assisting companies to create new jobs and improve worker skills. The agency offers a variety of training and educational grants, partners with Indiana's 26 WorkOne Centers, administers the unemployment insurance system, provides labor market information, assists employers with preparing workers for layoffs and closures and operates a statewide job placement service.